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CHAMPION SPRINTER RUNHAPPY HEADLINES SATURDAY'S ONE-MILE ACK ACK; LUKAS CLASSIC, JEFFERSON CUP COMPLETE CHURCHILL'S STAKES TRIPLEHEADER

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2016) – North America's reigning Champion Male Sprinter **Runhappy** landed post position No. 5 for his much-anticipated 4-year-old debut in Saturday's 24th running of the \$100,000 Ack Ack Presented by TwinSpires.com (Grade III) over one mile at Churchill Downs.

The Ack Ack, for 3-year-olds and up, is the centerpiece of a stakes tripleheader at Churchill Downs that also includes the \$175,000 Lukas Classic, which lured the last two winners of the Grade I Stephen Foster Handicap, and 3-year-olds on turf in the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup.

Churchill Downs admission gates open Saturday at 11:30 a.m. (all times Eastern) and the first of 11 races is 12:45 p.m.

The appropriately-named Runhappy will only have five challengers in the Ack Ack, but it's a contentious cast.

The complete Ack Ack field from the rail out (with jockeys and weights): **Iron Fist** (Robby Albarado, 121 pounds), **The Truth or Else** (Ricardo Santana Jr., 121), **Tom's Ready** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 118), **Mr. Z** (Calvin Borel, 121), **Runhappy** (Edgar Prado, 121) and **Schivarelli** (Corey Lanerie, 121).

Runhappy, a son of 2010 Kentucky Derby winner Super Saver, has amassed \$1,481,300 from seven wins in eight career starts that included a championship-worthy sprint campaign a year ago. The second half of his season showcased swift triumphs in Saratoga's \$500,000 King's Bishop (GI), Keeneland's \$250,000 Phoenix (GIII), the \$1.5 million TwinSpires Breeders' Cup Sprint (GI) at Keeneland and Santa Anita's \$300,000 Malibu (GI) on Dec. 26 – his last start.

Rather than target sprints as he's done in all but one of his starts, owner **Jim McIngvale** and trainer **Laura Wohlers** are eager to test Runhappy over longer distances with immediate goals including the \$1 million Las Vegas Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (GI) at Santa Anita on Nov. 4 and possibly the inaugural \$12 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational (GI) at Gulfstream Park on Jan. 28.

Two of the last three Ack Ack winners – **Pants On Fire** (2013) and **Tapiture** (2015) – used the race as a springboard to the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile.

Runhappy, who was sidelined by a front right cannon bone bruise earlier this year, has prepped for his return to action with a series of five published workouts, including a six-furlong move at Churchill Downs on Sept. 15 in 1:14.40 under regular rider **Edgar Prado**.

"The main thing was to get him to finish strong," Prado said of the Sept. 15 workout. "He's going a mile for the first time and we know that he's fast and we want to use what's there. We were trying to get him to relax and slowly pick them up. The gallop out was real good."

Runhappy's final breeze for the race – a half-mile in :46 – came Sunday at Keeneland.

"We let him grow up a little bit, and he's bigger and stronger this year," Wohlers said.

Calumet Farm's Mr. Z (20-2-5-4—\$1,160,378) also returns to action in the Ack Ack following an extended break and figures to be forwardly-placed for his first race since finishing last of eight in the \$500,000 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) last November. Last year's Ohio Derby winner and Indiana Derby (GII) runner-up will race Saturday without blinkers – equipment that Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas** had used in Mr. Z's last nine starts.

The field also features **Gayle and Tom Benson's** 3-year-old Tom's Ready (12-2-4-0—\$578,887), 1 ¼-length winner of Saratoga's \$500,000 Woody Stephens (GII); **Stonestreet Stables LLC and Regis Racing's** Iron Fist (11-3-3-2—\$416,065), two-length runner-up to **Frosted** in last year's \$1 million Pennsylvania Derby (GII); **Pike Placing Racing and Homewrecker Racing LLC's** Schivarelli (15-4-3-3—\$285,170), the runner-up to crack sprinter **Alsvind** in this summer's \$64,465 Kelly's Landing at Churchill Downs who followed that effort with a two-length romp over seven furlongs in a Saratoga allowance/optional claiming race; and **Harold Lerner LLC and Magdalena Racing's** The Truth or Else (23-4-3-5—\$453,166), who recently finished sixth in Saratoga's \$700,000 Forego (GI) on Aug. 27.

The Ack Ack, which goes as Race 9 at 4:49 p.m., honors the 1971 Horse of the Year **Ack Ack**, who won the 1969 Derby Trial at Churchill Downs in 1:34.40 which was a track record for one mile that has since been eclipsed.

Immediately following the Ack Ack is the fourth running of the \$175,000 Lukas Classic, a listed 1 1/8-mile race for 3-year-olds and up that lured **Bradester** and **Noble Bird**, the last two winners of the \$500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap Presented by GE Appliances (GI) at Churchill Downs.

Joseph W. Sutton's 6-year-old millionaire Bradester (25-10-6-2—\$1,179,532) has won three of his four starts this year, topped by a half-length triumph over **Eagle** in the June 18 Foster for his biggest career win. He also scored stakes wins this year at Monmouth Park in May's \$77,500 Majestic Light Stakes and July's \$200,000 Monmouth Cup (GII).

Bradester's lone defeat on the year came in his last start on Sept. 3 at Saratoga when he faded to eighth after setting the pace in the \$600,000 Woodward (GI) over 1 1/8 miles, which was won by **Shaman Ghost**.

John C. Oxley's 5-year-old Noble Bird (17-5-4-0—\$840,785), winner of the 2015 Stephen Foster (GI), seeks a return to the form that saw him win May's \$300,000 Pimlico Special Handicap (GIII) by a jaw-dropping 11 ¼ lengths. The **Mark Casse**-trained horse has tired after forcing the pace against Grade I competition in his last two starts, June's \$1.25 million Metropolitan Handicap (GI) at Belmont Park and the \$1.195 million Whitney (GI) at Saratoga on Aug. 6.

The Lukas Classic, renamed one year ago, honors the iconic 81-year-old Hall of Fame trainer **D. Wayne Lukas**. The four-time winner of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks and conditioner of 26 Eclipse Award-winning champions has been based at Churchill Downs' Barn 44 since 1989. He'll attempt to present the winning trophy to himself with **Calumet Farm's Natchez** (16-4-0-2—\$152,931), who returns to dirt after finishing last of nine in the \$250,000 Bernard Baruch Handicap (GII) over 1 1/16 miles on turf at Saratoga on Labor Day.

The field for the Lukas Classic, which goes as Race 10 at 5:20 p.m.: Natchez (Calvin Borel, 121); two-time Churchill Downs-winner **Honorable Duty** (Robby Albarado, 121); Seagram Cup (GIII) winner and Woodward fourth **Breaking Lucky** (Luis Contreras, 123); West Virginia Governor's Stakes winner and Greenwood Cup (GIII) runner-up **Hawaakom** (Miguel Mena, 121); Michael G. Schaefer Memorial runner-up and Lone Star Park Handicap (GIII) third **Rocket Time** (Edgar Prado, 121); Noble Bird (Julien Leparoux, 123); Bradester (Corey Lanerie, 125); Evangeline Mile winner **Fear the Cowboy** (Dusty Shepherd, 121); and Louisville Handicap (GIII) winner and Kentucky Turf Cup (GIII) runner-up **Bullards Alley** (Marcelino Pedroza Jr., 123).

The 40th running of the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup, a listed 1 1/8-mile race over the Matt Winn Turf Course for 3-year-olds, is headlined by a trio of \$300,000-earners: Arlington Classic (GIII) hero **Surgical Strike** (14-3-2-3—\$384,605), American Derby (GIII) and Mystic Lake Derby winner **One Mean Man** (15-5-3-1—\$356,597) and 2015 Summer Stakes (GII) victor **Conquest Daddy** (9-3-1-1—\$309,891).

The complete field for the Jefferson Cup, which will be run as Race 7 at 3:47 p.m.: **Torrontes** (Channing Hill, 118), **Seeking the Soul** (Miguel Mena, 118), Surgical Strike (James Graham, 120), One Mean Man (Robby Albarado, 120), **Bondurant** (Brian Hernandez Jr., 118), **Barahona** (Shaun Bridgmohan, 118), **Madtap** (Ricardo Santana Jr., 118), **Zapperini** (Corey Lanerie, 118), Conquest Daddy (Luis Contreras, 118) and **Keystoneforvictory** (Julien Leparoux, 118).

General admission to Churchill Downs is \$3 and reserved seat packages start at \$10, which are available for purchase online at www.ChurchillDowns.com.

In addition to the live action at Churchill Downs, there are 10 major simulcast races from across the country with Breeders' Cup implications on Saturday: the \$500,000 Joe Hirsch Turf Classic (GI), \$400,000 Beldame (GI), \$350,000 Vosburgh (GI), \$300,000 Gallant Bloom Handicap (GII) and \$300,000 Pilgrim (GIII) from Belmont Park, and the \$300,000 Awesome Again (GI), \$300,000 Zenyatta (GI), \$300,000 Rodeo Drive (GI), \$300,000 FrontRunner (GI) and \$300,000 Chandelier (GI) from Santa Anita. The FrontRunner for 2-year-olds and Chandelier for 2-year-old fillies are Prep Season races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks, respectively, which award points (10-4-2-1) to the Top 4 finishers in those races.

Saturday's National Weather Service forecast for Louisville calls for mostly cloudy skies with a high near 70 and a 50-percent chance of showers, mainly before 3 p.m.

Saturday is the penultimate day of Churchill Downs' 11-date September Meet. Closing day is Sunday.

Churchill Downs, the world's most legendary racetrack, has conducted Thoroughbred racing and presented America's greatest race, the Kentucky Derby, continuously since 1875. Located in Louisville, the flagship racetrack of Churchill Downs Incorporated (NASDAQ: CHDN) offers year-round simulcast wagering at the historic track. Churchill Downs will conduct the 143rd running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands on May 6, 2017. The track will conduct two more live racing meets in 2016: the September Meet (Sept. 16-Oct. 2) and the Fall Meet (Oct. 30-Nov. 27). Churchill Downs has hosted the Breeders' Cup World Championships eight times and the event will return to the track in 2018. Information is available at www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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